

Conference on Disarmament

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Final record of the one thousand two hundred and sixth plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 17 February 2011, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Marius Grinius: (Canada)

The President: I call to order the 1206th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

(continued in French)

Before beginning the substantive work of this session, I would like to take this opportunity to extend a very warm welcome to a new colleague who has just arrived in Geneva, I believe for the second time, as representative of his Government: Mr. François Roux, Ambassador of Belgium. I can assure him that we will extend our full cooperation and support to him as he carries out his duties.

(continued in English)

Before turning to the list of speakers today, I would like the Conference to take action on an additional request from a non-member State to participate in our work in 2011. The request emanates from Montenegro and is contained in document CD/WP.563/Add.2. May I take it that that Conference wishes to invite Montenegro to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

Now I would like to proceed with the list of speakers.

Ms. Rahamimoff Honig (Israel): Mr. President, although a significant part of the Canadian presidency has already elapsed, and this is in fact your last plenary, as this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor, please allow me at the outset to congratulate you warmly on your presidency and on your relentless efforts to promote the work of the Conference on Disarmament and achieve an agreed programme of work. Let me assure you, and future presidents, of my delegation's full cooperation and support in the fulfilment of your duties.

Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament has long been in need of an agreed, clear, comprehensive and up-to-date vision which would move it away from the deadlock which has curtailed its work for over a decade. We remain convinced that the Conference continues to have an important role to play as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. The Conference, whose membership includes all the relevant States, is a unique and valuable forum. Its legacy and past contribution to multilateral disarmament efforts are undisputed. Recently, the initiation of independent initiatives has been raised as a possible alternative to the Conference's lack of progress. While such suggestions may strive to take outside the Conference on Disarmament issues which are under the responsibility and mandate of this body, thus circumventing the complexities of the multilateral arena and achieving swifter results, one should seriously examine their actual value and the extent to which they will realistically promote the global arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. Such exercises may succeed in achieving an agreed outcome of the like-minded, but this may come at the cost of undermining the Conference on Disarmament, a result which Israel would view as highly unfortunate.

From Israel's point of view, the member States of the Conference on Disarmament should strive to agree on a realistic and pragmatic programme of work, one which does not overlook the aspirations of the global community but at the same time is firmly rooted in the ground. Despite the substantive and beneficial discussion which has taken place over the past two weeks on the four core issues, it seems clear that deadlock remains over the way forward. While such a stalemate persists over the four core issues, there is no reason, in our view, why substantive progress could not be made on other issues which may also have a significant impact on State, regional and global security.

In this respect Israel has been calling for the past several years, under agenda item 7, on transparency in armaments, for the banning of transfers of arms to terrorists to be addressed as a matter of priority. Israel outlined its fundamental position on this issue in 2007 in document CD/1823. As a lacuna exists regarding a clear and comprehensive norm

banning such transfers, it would be well worth our while to explore the possibilities for creating such a codified norm as well as demanding that concrete steps be taken against those who continue to transfer arms and ammunition to terrorists. We are of the view that this issue could provide States with an active negotiating agenda while deadlock remains over other issues. While it may not address those issues identified by the international community as the Conference's fundamental *raison d'être*, it will allow for substantive work to be done on an issue which has a significant impact in many regions of the world and which may be the cause of internal, regional and even global instability.

The Conference's rule of procedure which stipulates that its work be carried out by consensus stems from the recognition that in order to seriously and effectively address global security challenges, States' security concerns cannot be sidelined. In this respect, it is our hope that member States of the Conference will adopt for 2011 a vision which continues to respect these considerations while allowing substantive work to take place.

Ms. Holm Ericson (Sweden): Mr. President, I would like to give a little bit of information about a side event that was held on space security issues on 7 February 2011. The organizer of the event was the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which is an independent international research institution with its headquarters in Stockholm. The event was moderated by the deputy director of SIPRI, Mr. Daniel Nord. He mentioned at the outset that SIPRI stands ready to contribute to the work of the Conference on Disarmament by sharing its research findings in areas of relevance to the Conference.

At the side event on space security, a SIPRI researcher, Dr. Bharath Gopalaswamy, provided an account of the situation with regard to the increase in space activities in terms of the number of commercial satellites, but also in terms of the amount of space debris. It was particularly noted that space debris, if it were to increase further, would pose a serious threat to the increasingly important uses of space for communication, navigation and other important purposes.

The Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Ms. Theresa Hitchens, gave additional information about the current use of space, with an emphasis on the need for additional international arrangements and rules for this use. The importance of transparency and confidence-building measures was noted. She also highlighted that it is difficult to separate military and civilian aspects from each other. Another point brought up was the need to establish a kind of division of work and responsibility between the different international forums concerned.

Finally, the Director of Non-Proliferation and Disarmament of the European External Action Service, Ms. Annalisa Giannella, gave an account of the European Union's proposal for an international code of conduct on outer space activities.

The three presentations were followed by a discussion about the Conference on Disarmament and space security issues.

This very short summary is of course entirely my own, and surely other participants will have brought back other aspects of the presentations and the discussions. However, for our part, we found the event useful for increasing our knowledge of issues at hand, just as has been the case with other side events on space here in Geneva. I hope others found it useful too.

While I have the floor, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Australia and Japan for organizing the expert side event on definitions for a fissile material cut-off treaty this week. My delegation found these expert discussions very useful for deepening and broadening our understanding of some very technical issues, and I should especially compliment Ambassador Woolcott on the way he guided the discussions. We would certainly be glad to participate in more such discussions.

Mr. Woolcott (Australia): Mr. President, I take the floor on behalf of Australia and Japan. May I first take this opportunity to congratulate you on your presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to thank you for the manner in which you have guided the Conference during your presidency. You have set a high standard in your active and consultative approach.

Australia and Japan continue to support efforts to ensure that negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) on the basis of the Shannon mandate can begin in the Conference on Disarmament as soon as possible through a work programme.

To build confidence and momentum towards that long-standing goal of FMCT negotiations in the Conference, Australia and Japan co-hosted at the Palais des Nations over the past three days an expert side event on the FMCT. This event was focused on possible definitions in the future treaty.

As I intimated in the Conference on 3 February, I chaired this event with the assistance of Dr. Bruno Pellaud as vice-chair and rapporteur. And I again place on record my gratitude to Switzerland for facilitating Dr. Pellaud's participation in this event.

I shall provide a more detailed written report to the Conference in my personal capacity at a future plenary meeting and hope that this may stimulate further substantive debate in plenary. But to summarize briefly: on Monday Mr. Kevin Alldred of the International Atomic Energy Agency started the event with a presentation on the nuclear fuel cycle. This was followed by an exchange on how the term "fissile material" might be defined in the future FMCT. On Tuesday we continued our discussion with an exchange on how "production" might be defined in the treaty. Yesterday we concluded the event with a session which posed the open question of whether there were any other definitions which might be relevant for the future FMCT.

While the discussions did not reach any definitive answers — and that was not their purpose — they did allow us to delve into the issues in greater depth and to bring out linkages between particular definitions and also between certain definitions and other core elements of the future treaty, including verification arrangements and scope.

Australia and Japan take this opportunity to thank all the member and observer States of the Conference on Disarmament that participated in this expert side event. It was pleasing to see in attendance a substantial number of experts who in some cases had travelled from distant capitals. They enriched our discussions and understanding of this important topic.

Australia and Japan saw from this event a strong interest in FMCT among many Conference member and observer delegations and a willingness to engage in sustained discussion on these issues. We also saw a willingness to continue exploring elements of the FMCT through this format, as the Conference continues its efforts to establish and implement a work programme.

Noting again the Secretary-General's suggestion here on 26 January — in respect of fissile material — for, and I quote, "a basic process to educate each other and build trust which will inform and facilitate the formal process once the Conference on Disarmament adopts its work programme", Australia and Japan will now look to build on this expert side event and to coordinate a second expert side event on the FMCT in the Palais des Nations in the near future, following further substantive debate in plenary. We will keep the Conference informed in this regard.

Australia and Japan hope that these events will provide the building blocks and the confidence for future FMCT negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Macedo Soares (Brazil) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to welcome Ambassador Roux of Belgium. He has the advantage, or disadvantage, of being able to hear me even without a headset.

(*continued in Spanish*)

Mr. President, I have taken the floor to announce that this year the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the Conference on Disarmament will act as the coordinator in Geneva for the members of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL). It is an honour for my delegation to carry out this task, which I will begin by giving the members of the Conference on Disarmament some brief historical background on OPANAL and on the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, also known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

OPANAL was established under article 7 of the Treaty in order to ensure member States' compliance. When it came into force in 1969, the Treaty of Tlatelolco established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a permanently inhabited area. All 33 States of Latin America and the Caribbean are parties. According to the provisions of the Treaty, signatory States shall refrain from engaging in, encouraging or authorizing, directly or indirectly, the testing, use, manufacture, production, possession or control of any nuclear weapon.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco, unlike other similar instruments, provides for its institutionalization to ensure better implementation of the commitments of States parties. OPANAL has its headquarters in Mexico City. Its main organs are the General Conference, which meets in ordinary session every two years and in extraordinary session as the need arises; the Council, composed of five States parties meeting every two months; and a general secretariat. On 1 February 2010 Ambassador Gioconda Úbeda Rivera of Costa Rica took office as Secretary-General for a period of four years.

Mr. President, as you have already mentioned, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones began with the Treaty of Tlatelolco and has continued to develop with the creation of new zones. Currently 114 States are part of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Two conferences, one in 2005 and one in 2010, brought together all 114 countries of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Second Conference of States Parties and Signatories to Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, and Mongolia, held in April 2010 in New York, allowed us to send a joint message to the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I take this opportunity to highlight the importance that all nuclear-weapon-free zones have in ensuring that most of the Earth's surface is free from the scourge of nuclear weapons, and most of the Earth's population free from their threatening presence.

Just as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and other measures aim to progressively limit the conditions under which nuclear weapons can be produced, so nuclear-weapon-free zones impose a geographical limit. As these zones multiply, the area infested by nuclear weapons is reduced. At the same time I wish to draw attention to the fact that States that have renounced nuclear weapons are still not free from nuclear aggression or nuclear threat. This is why Brazil and the other 113 States belonging to nuclear-weapon-free zones are insisting on a multilateral and legally binding instrument guaranteeing that there shall be no use, or threat of use, of nuclear weapons against States that do not possess nuclear weapons.

The decision to base the coordination of OPANAL in Geneva and New York was made by the OPANAL Council in July 2010 and approved by resolution CG/E/RES.528 during the twentieth special session of the General Conference, held on 18 November 2010. On 27 January 2011 the OPANAL Council decided that Brazil would be responsible for coordination in Geneva. The role of OPANAL coordinator in Geneva is to consolidate dialogue and the exchange of information between OPANAL and the Conference on

Disarmament. The Permanent Mission of Brazil is ready to provide any information that members of the Conference on Disarmament may need about our regional activities.

At the same time, I am pleased to note that three of the six countries that will hold the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2011 are OPANAL members: Chile, Colombia and Cuba.

Mr. Garcia (Philippines): Mr. President, on behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament, I have the honour to convey to you and the entire Canadian team our most heartfelt gratitude for making the discussion on Conference membership expansion one of your priorities during your term as president. We hope that this matter will also be a priority for the succeeding presidencies of the Conference. Your efforts in consulting with our group and your positive and exhaustive exploration of the question of enlargement with the Conference as a whole are greatly appreciated. We would also like to thank those groups and members of the Conference that have expressed their support for the examination of membership expansion.

The informal group's call for membership expansion has its basis in the Conference's rules of procedure and previous practice. The rules call for the periodic review of the question of membership; more than a decade has passed since the last review. Indeed, this lapse does not reflect current international security realities, especially as the Conference on Disarmament is mandated to negotiate legally binding instruments which are expected to have universal effect. We have also appealed for the appointment of a special rapporteur on the question of membership expansion, which was last done in 2001. The appointment was also an important element of the chair's summary of the high-level meeting. Again, we only wish to begin discussion on this issue, and not to prejudge or presume any particular outcome.

Mr. President, we would also like to thank you for your energy and creativity in seeking to advance the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Regrettably, we have not yet been able to adopt and implement a programme of work, but we continue to encourage the Conference to realize, at its earliest opportunity, a balanced programme. Nevertheless, we have heard in this chamber numerous important statements by such distinguished speakers as the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and have had the opportunity to exchange ideas on the core issues of the Conference.

The informal group of observer States again thanks the Canadian presidency for its efforts, and looks forward to working constructively and effectively with the succeeding presidents of the Conference.

Mr. Khvostov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all I would like to welcome to the conference our colleague and my neighbour here, the Ambassador of Belgium. I wish him every success in his work.

Mr. President, I would like to express our great appreciation for your contribution to the work of the Conference, and in particular your initiative to hold thematic debates on agenda items of the Conference on Disarmament directly in the Conference plenary meetings. As we see it, these debates took place in a very positive and constructive atmosphere, making it possible to build trust among delegations and filling us with hope that negotiations will soon resume in this forum. Given the high level of activity shown by delegations and the readiness of many to discuss the important substantive elements of the existing agenda, we think that further such debates would be very welcome. At the same time we ask future presidents to make every effort to find an acceptable formula for the programme of work so that we can really tackle the Conference's substantive work.

The probability that new types of weapons of mass destruction would be developed whose destructive effect resembled that of an atomic bomb or chemical or biological

weapons was first mentioned in the United Nations back in 1948. The 1970s and 1980s saw lively discussion here in the Conference on Disarmament about the possibility of producing both a comprehensive agreement prohibiting the development of new types of weapons of mass destruction and specific agreements on identified types of weapons of mass destruction.

Since 1979, the Belarusian delegation to the United Nations has been advocating the adoption of a General Assembly resolution to prohibit the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons. The most recent such resolution, No. 63/36, was adopted in 2008. This year, during the sixty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, my delegation intends to submit its latest resolution on that subject, and we hope that in the spirit of constructive multilateralism we will manage to restore the practice of adopting this resolution by consensus, as was the case until 2005.

In today's world there is a great need for a periodic assessment of the impact of science and technology on international security. According to the resolution, the Conference on Disarmament is the most suitable forum for these assessments. The Belarusian delegation believes in a preventive approach to this issue. It is our belief that the international community should consider the possibility of developing an international legal instrument before the manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction becomes a reality. In this connection we are convinced that developing a universal legally binding international treaty to prohibit the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons may well be the most effective option. At the same time, we acknowledge that it will only be possible to step up the activities of the Conference on agenda item 5 if progress is made in finding solutions to the first four core issues. For the time being we are prepared to encourage debate on the subject in the Conference on Disarmament in both formal and informal plenary meetings.

At the end of the 2010 session of the Conference on Disarmament, I chaired informal sessions on agenda item 5, "New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons". The main content of the debate in those sessions is reflected in my report as the debate moderator, which has been incorporated into document CD/1899. In my opinion, while certain well-known positions on various aspects of the topic were confirmed in the course of the debate, there did also seem to be fresh input. In the concluding part I also stressed the support of delegations for continuing discussions on subjects related to this agenda item.

Mr. Novokhatskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, in this statement I would like to focus on items 5, 6 and 7 of our agenda.

Discussions about new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons here in the Conference on Disarmament already have a wealth of history behind them. Scientific and technical progress have taken us far, and today there is no doubt how important it is to monitor trends in the military use of scientific and technological achievements, so as to identify in a timely way the possibility that new types of systems of weapons of mass destruction may appear.

Furthermore, nowadays we are rethinking the very concept of a weapon. We are moving away from narrow and exclusively military definitions. Nowadays we are talking not just about weapons of mass destruction but about weapons of mass disruption, with reference to means, including scientific and technical ones, that may be used for hostile purposes. Thus for this agenda item we think that in addition to radiological weapons we could also talk about information and communication technologies that can be used to harm the security interests of States. General Assembly resolution 65/41, adopted by consensus, calls upon States to continue to study existing and potential threats in the sphere of

information security, including under the aegis of the group of governmental experts on international information security to be set up in 2012.

At present, with the emergence of new challenges and threats, maintaining a reliable level of physical nuclear security is an important element for strengthening global security. We all share the aim of creating a safer world that is protected from the potential threats of nuclear terrorism, black markets in nuclear materials and other real and hypothetical nuclear challenges. It seems to us that these tasks are closely linked with the subject of radiological weapons, which itself can be considered in relation to the potential risks of terrorists acquiring, transferring or using nuclear materials, radioactive substances or homemade explosive devices containing such materials, or carrying out hostile actions directed at nuclear facilities.

I would like to point out that under this item we attach great importance to the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, at the initiative of Belarus, on the prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons.

I would like to move very briefly on to agenda item 6, "Comprehensive programme of disarmament". We have no objections to the establishment of the post of special coordinator or chair of a working group for this agenda item. If necessary, this coordinator could work on new issues on the Conference agenda.

Regarding agenda item 7, "Transparency in armaments", we would like to say the following: the Russian Federation's approach to transparency in armaments is based on confidence-building measures in the field of armaments, and we have traditionally supported measures promoting such transparency. Transparency in armaments should, of course, not threaten the national security of States beneficiaries, create obstacles to the legal export of weapons, or facilitate access by terrorists to weapons. The technical aspects of disarmament mechanisms, the categorization of weapons, and the extension and listing of such categories should not take precedence over the political intent of such mechanisms as confidence-building measures. Providing additional information outside the framework of the agreed weapons categories should be optional. We would be prepared not to object to re-establishing the post of special coordinator or chair of a working group for agenda item 7.

Mr. Danon (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, let me begin by welcoming our new colleague, the Ambassador of Belgium, and, of course, by assuring him that the French delegation will support him in his work so as to ensure the success of his mission.

As this is our last plenary meeting under your presidency, Mr. President, I would also like to thank you, and to congratulate you, for what in our view has been a very successful presidency. Like everyone else in the room, we would have preferred to adopt a programme of work at the beginning of the year. Things being what they are, we can in the meantime affirm that the discussions you were able to organize were all very interesting and of a very high standard and that, even without a programme of work, the Conference was able to continue its work, which is always to be welcomed. I believe that, thanks to you and to the upcoming presidencies, we will have a sort of blueprint for organizing debates, for achieving balance between those debates, and for transparency in consultations. As a result, we finally have, as of the start of 2011, a fairly satisfactory way of working.

This leads me to say that I have always believed that without a programme of work, it was still possible for work to be done at the Conference, either in the plenary or in the context of side events. I do not wish to reopen the debate about whether these events constitute part of the work of the Conference. We are not going to take turns reiterating our views in that regard. Personally speaking, I believe that these side events can, in any event, be extremely useful for addressing substantive issues. That is indeed what happened at the

side events organized by Australia and Japan. I want to thank both of those countries for that initiative. I must say that, although I had my misgivings with regard to the substance of the debates, I was very pleasantly surprised by what was said over the course of those three days. I would especially like to thank Mr. Woolcott, who chaired the event, as well as Mr. Bruno Pellaud, whose impartiality and technical skills were perfectly suited to the work of those three days.

I believe that we have made progress since the discussions held several years ago on the same issues, and perhaps I will have the opportunity to come back to this in other discussions which will deal with the definition of fissile material, as well as the definitions of verification and stockpiles. Truly new elements were brought to the table, but the most important aspect was that mentioned by Mr. Woolcott just now, namely that the overwhelming majority of States present expressed a real desire to negotiate a treaty on fissile material. That pressure to start negotiation is of paramount importance, I believe, for the rest of our work.

I did not intend to address other issues but, given what was said in the meeting this morning, I would like to make one or two remarks.

Firstly, on Israel's words with regard to agenda item 7, I am not going to reiterate the French position on transparency vis-à-vis armaments, as that position is well known. I would, however, like to address just the specific point that Ms. Rahamimoff Honig raised on formulating a norm for banning the transfer of arms to terrorist entities. It is clear that, politically, one cannot but support an approach by which the transfer of arms to terrorists would be blocked. The difficulty, however, lies in the implementation of such a norm. I recall that in New York more than six successive committees were established to attempt to establish a definition of "terrorist", yet none of those committees succeeded in doing so. To define a ban on transfers to terrorists leads to the question of terrorism and, straight away, the debate gets bogged down in the definition thereof. I think that the approach we will try to take, in the framework of the arms trade treaty, whose preparatory committee, as everyone knows, will hold its next session in New York in a week's time, will at least partially address this legitimate concern. In the framework of the treaty, this issue can be addressed from a political standpoint in the preamble, for example, but also in a concrete and practical manner in the body of the treaty, as the treaty will focus on the criteria according to which a State can decide whether or not to export arms to another State or entity. We therefore believe that, even if the arms trade treaty will not completely resolve the worrying issue of the transfer of arms to terrorist entities, much progress can be achieved by applying the criteria set forth in the treaty. We will probably have another opportunity to speak about this in New York.

With regard to the remarks made by the delegation of Brazil, we would like to stress that we stand ready to work with the Brazilian delegation, in its capacity as coordinator for the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), on the nuclear threats facing States that have set up nuclear-weapon-free zones, and on the legal scope of protocols that nuclear States may sign. We stand fully ready to work on this issue with Brazil.

Finally, with regard to the remarks made by Russia, openness to new subjects, including information security, is a recurring aspect of our work in Geneva, and France has always supported the idea of adapting the Conference so that it can address new issues related to real threats. We can, of course, work on these issues, and we stand ready to do so, but our real priorities remain, above all, the threats posed by nuclear proliferation and the need to stop the growth of nuclear arsenals. Priority must therefore be given to the treaty on fissile materials.

Mr. Wang Qun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the new Ambassador of Belgium.

The distinguished ambassadors of Australia and Germany have just spoken about the state of affairs with regard to the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) side event organized by Australia and Japan a few days ago. China already explained its position on this side event at the plenary meeting on 8 February. China is not in favour of and did not take part in this side event. Given that such side events lack wide participation, and that their outcome has no standing within the Conference on Disarmament, China will not endorse the outcome. In the interest of upholding the authority of the Conference on Disarmament and its rules of procedure and of ensuring wide participation by member States, the Chinese side has consistently held that the Conference on Disarmament is the only appropriate forum for the negotiation of an FMCT. We hope that such negotiations will begin as soon as possible within the Conference in accordance with its rules of procedure. China wishes to place the above position on record.

Mr. President, China expresses its appreciation for your outstanding leadership. Under your leadership, the work of the Conference on Disarmament has developed in an orderly, thorough manner and is gaining considerable momentum. This has laid a solid foundation for the next phase of the work of the Conference and its future progress. This in itself constitutes progress in the Conference on Disarmament, and China appreciates all your efforts in this regard. We hope that all parties will cherish and preserve this momentum, and that under the leadership of the incoming president, the Ambassador of Chile, all sides will continue to work together to facilitate early progress in the work of the Conference. China will continue to make its own efforts and contributions.

Mr. Roux (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, Director General, ladies and gentlemen, let me first thank you for your words of welcome. I would also like to congratulate Canada on its excellent chairship and give my best wishes to Chile, which will begin its presidency next week. I would like to assure my neighbours, the distinguished ambassadors of Brazil and Belarus, that every time they take the floor, I will hear their every word loud and clear.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure the six presidents for 2011 that the Kingdom of Belgium fully supports their efforts to move the Conference forward and break out of the impasse in which it has languished for so many years.

The obstacles are many. They have been identified. To overcome those obstacles, Belgium is willing to work with all member States, without exception and granting due consideration to the views expressed by each and every one.

In international relations, nothing is ever set in stone. I would therefore like to express the hope that the Conference will be able to benefit from the interesting developments that have occurred in disarmament negotiations, so as to move towards the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, as defined by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In line with statements by the European Union with which Belgium has aligned itself, we give priority to the issue of a fissile material cut-off treaty. We are ready to engage in substantive discussions on all issues covered by the programme of work adopted by the Conference under the Algerian presidency in 2009.

Mr. Van den IJssel (Netherlands): Mr. President, I have to start with an apology to the interpreters that we have not provided them with a written text, but I will try to speak slowly. And, of course, a very special welcome from our delegation and from me personally to Ambassador Roux. It is a pleasure to have him in our midst, and we are looking forward to working closely with him and his delegation.

We have asked for the floor today to present our position on agenda item 7, on transparency in armaments. To us, transparency is very important, both as a confidence-building measure in itself and as an important instrument in the framework of verification and compliance measures. We are always prepared to listen to suggestions to increase or improve openness. The Netherlands is committed to transparency in its national export policy regarding conventional arms, and annually the Netherlands Government publishes a report on the licences granted and denied in the previous year. Since the establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, the Netherlands has submitted the relevant data on exports and imports to the Register on an annual basis. The Netherlands was among the founding fathers of the Register and is traditionally the main sponsor of the General Assembly resolution on the Register and transparency in armaments, which will again be submitted at this year's General Assembly for consideration by the First Committee.

As far as weapons of mass destruction are concerned, we also think the concept of transparency is important. We are, therefore, very supportive of the transparency measures being taken in the appropriate forums. In the context of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), I refer, among others, to action 5 (g) and action 19 in the action plan agreed on at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. As far as chemical weapons are concerned, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons are relevant, and we are looking closely at possibilities for increasing transparency in relation to biological weapons in the framework of the confidence-building measures on the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

As I said, we favour maximum transparency, and we are open to suggestions in this regard. At the same time, as things stand now, I do not really see how discussions on transparency in armaments in the Conference on Disarmament as a certain agenda item will have added value to the existing mechanisms I just sketched. Let me also respond to our Israeli colleague, or react to her proposal to explore the banning of transfers to terrorists. We are, of course, in full agreement that that issue deserves our full attention, but we have to give some further thought to whether this issue should be considered under this agenda item or if other forums, like the arms trade treaty, are better suited to dealing with this indeed pressing problem.

Mr. President, while I have the floor, please allow me to respond or to react to the presentation just made by Ambassador Woolcott of Australia. The Netherlands would like to thank the Governments of Australia and Japan for organizing the expert side event, and we are also very grateful to the Government of Switzerland for providing assistance for that very successful event. The discussions we had over the past three days among experts and diplomats were useful and insightful. Although the discussions underlined again the complexity and technical nature of the topic, I personally found the interaction between diplomats and experts very encouraging. I believe we can learn, and indeed we have learned, from each other in these past three days. The Netherlands would strongly support similar events in the near future on another issue related to the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). The success of this side event shows that Conference members can have meaningful discussions on issues on the Conference agenda in the margins of the Conference on Disarmament. As was mentioned by Australia in its invitation letter, the process might establish a body of collective written work which would assist and provide the building blocks for FMCT negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

Let me conclude, Mr. President, by thanking you and your team for an outstanding presidency, and let me assure the incoming president, Ambassador Oyarce, of our full support.

Mr. Rao (India): Mr. President, let me begin by extending a warm welcome to Ambassador Roux, the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the Conference on Disarmament. We look forward to working with him and his delegation.

I thank the Permanent Representative of Australia, Ambassador Woolcott, for presenting an oral report on the deliberations at the side event on the issue of a fissile material cut-off treaty, held jointly by Australia with Japan as a national initiative this week. We participated in the side event as we have done in similar side events in the past. We note that the sponsors have stated that the discussions at the side events are neither negotiations nor pre-negotiations; they are without prejudice to substantive positions of delegations. The objective of the exercise is solely to promote understanding of issues and to build confidence and momentum towards negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of the Shannon mandate.

As I stated in my remarks in the Conference plenary of 3 February, we attach importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum and to its rules of procedure. We expect the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate instruments of universal application; we support efforts for reaching consensus on a programme of work for commencement, inter alia, of FMCT negotiations. Given the Conference's vocation, it is essential that all relevant countries participate in the negotiations and contribute to their successful outcome.

It is obvious that discussions in the Conference on Disarmament or in the side events outside it cannot be a substitute for formal FMCT negotiations in a subsidiary body in the Conference, in accordance with its rules of procedure.

Mr. President, before I conclude, and as this is the last plenary under your presidency, let me take this opportunity to thank you for your efforts as President and assure Ambassador Oyarce of Chile of our full cooperation when he assumes the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on the manner in which you have conducted the work of the Conference on Disarmament. You have been most transparent and most dedicated, and we fully appreciate the efforts that you have tirelessly made to ensure that we engage in substantive discussions in our work. I would also like to welcome, in anticipation of his presidency, the incoming president, the Ambassador of Chile, and to assure him of our fullest cooperation in the future. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the new Ambassador of Belgium to the Conference on Disarmament and assure him of our cooperation.

We have heard a chorus of support for the side event that was organized by Australia and Japan on the issue of the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), or aspects of the FMCT. My country did not participate in this side event as a matter of principle. We have no opposition to side events; we do participate in engagements organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and other such forums, but we felt that this kind of side event would undermine the work of the Conference on Disarmament itself, and for that reason we felt our participation should not contribute to this effort, to what we see as an effort that could undermine this forum, which we believe is the only forum in which we can engage in such activities and, if the conditions are right, engage in negotiations.

We saw no value addition from this side event. If it had been conducted within the Conference — and we have precedents for this, both in the plenary and in informal discussions — it could have been more worthwhile for all of us and perhaps would have had even greater acceptability than it does now because, as we have heard, this does not in any way contribute to the work of the Conference, nor will it be considered as work of the Conference. It is for this reason that my delegation, despite some of the advice we have heard from friends to take up issues of interest to us, such as negative security assurances,

in a side event – it is for this reason that we have not agreed to do so, because we feel that discussion on these important issues must take place within the forum of the Conference on Disarmament, in the plenary or in informal sessions, but organizing a side event would be counterproductive for this organization.

There is a sense among some of us that this side event could be a precursor to an argument that has been made in some quarters to take the negotiations on FMCT outside the Conference on Disarmament to another venue or create another forum. Well, delegations that wish to do so are welcome, obviously – my delegation cannot stop them. But I can tell you now that we will not participate in such alternative negotiations, and I suspect there are a large number of other countries that would not do so either, some on principle, others perhaps because they would not have the comfort, in such a venue, of consensus. This is something we need to reflect on as we proceed.

Mr. Lauber (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Roux, the new Permanent Representative and Ambassador of Belgium, and tell him how happy we are to see him once more here in Geneva.

(*continued in English*)

I would like to say a few words on the status of work in the Conference at this juncture, and I would certainly like to start by thanking you, Mr. President, and your delegation for all your efforts in the past weeks during the preparation and the actual period of your presidency. Although the Conference has not yet been able to adopt a programme of work, thanks to your leadership we have at least had structured plenary sessions, and we very much hope that this model will be followed and similar exercises will continue under the next presidencies. In the view of my delegation, to structure plenary sessions and the thematic debates we have here were a good start and a good use of time. They were of high quality and had good participation by delegations. The structured plenary discussions also showed the willingness of an overwhelming majority of delegations not to further waste time and resources, but to start meaningful work on all four core issues. In my opinion, discussions also confirmed that, while negotiations on a fissile material treaty are a much-needed and logical next step in disarmament, the three other core issues are high priority as well.

Let me also say a few words regarding the Australian-Japanese initiative to hold side events on a particular issue of the Conference, namely the definitions for a fissile material treaty. Switzerland has supported this from the beginning, and I thank those of you who addressed kind words to our expert, Mr. Bruno Pellaud. I will make sure that he hears them through me. I was very impressed by the participation of many delegates and many experts from capitals in these talks. I am convinced that the talks and the outcome we will have from those talks are, or can be, an important contribution to the work of the Conference. We would also welcome it if other topics linked to fissile material, like verification or scope, could be treated in the same format subsequently, and we would equally appreciate it if some others of the Conference core issues could be approached in a similar manner. We would certainly support any delegation willing to take up such an initiative, and we would be ready to contribute substantially, as we did to the Japanese-Australian initiative.

Of course this approach will only complement and never substitute for the ordinary, formal Conference approach. Specific working groups need to be established in the near future, as this is what the Conference is mandated to do. We hope that your efforts and your successors' efforts regarding a programme of work will continue and that the next presidency will be able to table relevant drafts. In the meantime, again, we encourage future presidencies to use the Canadian model and have more structured thematic debates in the plenary to continue discussions on the four core issues. We would also welcome discussions on other issues such as housekeeping issues like the effective functioning of

this body. Those discussions in plenary could include, for example, the expansion of the Conference, the review of the rules of procedure or exchanges with civil society. All of these issues are close to our heart. In this context we also do not really agree with those who believe that such other issues will distract us from our work. The Conference is endowed with the possibility to hold parallel, not only consecutive, discussions. Now, after all this time, it seems to me sometimes that we are spending too much time lamenting the stalemate we perceive in the Conference and are becoming more and more afraid of actually becoming active. I think we really need to change that mindset. Call me an optimist, but I have had a feeling during your presidency that there was a spirit of readiness to take action going through the room. Again, Mr. President, I would like to thank you and your delegation very much for enabling that spirit, and I would like to assure the next presidency, and especially Ambassador Oyarce of Chile, that we stand ready to do our best to keep this spirit alive or even increase it.

Mr. Khelif (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Algerian delegation would first like to join the previous speakers in welcoming the Ambassador of Belgium, and to say that it looks forward to working with him in order to move the Conference on Disarmament forward.

We listened carefully to the statement made by the Ambassador of Australia on the recent side event, and we thank him for having organized that event, which was useful for exchanging information. Algeria participated in it just as it participates in all other side events. However, the Algerian delegation would like to reiterate the position it has expressed in the past, namely, that this side event has no link whatsoever with the activities of the Conference on Disarmament.

The political interpretations that we have heard today might affect our position vis-à-vis any future side events.

The discussions on the four core issues were very useful for us here at the Conference, and we would also like to affirm the importance of agenda items 5, 6 and 7. We hope that these items will continue to be discussed more specifically and in a more systematic way in the future. However, there is a point that we may have overlooked. So far we have discussed six agenda items, but we have heard no reference to agenda item 2 concerning the prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters. We hope that this item will remain on the agenda because, as long as there are nuclear weapons and as long as there are nuclear doctrines that allow for the use of such weapons, the threat of a nuclear war will continue to hang over us. For this reason we would like this issue to be included in future discussions.

To conclude, we have taken note of a number of proposals made today on the subject of transparency, and we would like to say that any proposal needs to take account of the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament, which, first and foremost, as the name suggests, concerns disarmament. We must also bear in mind that there are other international forums in which some of the items that have been proposed could be discussed. In particular, as regards the question of terrorism, and as the Ambassador of France said, before we ban the transfer of weapons to terrorists, we need to define who is a terrorist and who is not. We do not think that the Conference on Disarmament is qualified to discuss such issues and, if we did introduce such discussions into the Conference, we do not think we would be making our task any easier. On the contrary, we might be making things more complicated for ourselves.

Ms. Rahamimoff Honig (Israel): Mr. President, I apologize for taking the floor once again. Just quickly to thank the distinguished ambassadors of France and the Netherlands for their comments and the recognition of the pressing need to address the issue of arms transfers to terrorists. Israel is fully cognizant of the continuous problem of

agreeing on who is a terrorist and has given some thought to this problem. While we do not agree on who is a terrorist, there is a wide body of agreement in the international community regarding what constitutes terrorist acts, and this is something that we could perhaps build on as a basis for future work. I will refrain at this point from delving further into this issue and will reserve my right to come back to this issue at a later date.

Mr. Kam Woon-an (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, the Korean delegation would like to echo the statements from many countries on the side event on the issue of a fissile material cut-off treaty. The Korean delegation appreciated the successful side event organized by Australia and Japan and their devotion to organizing the event. It was very informative and constructive, illustrating clearly that the devil is in the details. It looked like a mental exercise for the main game. The Korean delegation would like to encourage other delegations to organize similar efforts. Sometimes beating around the bush can lead us to a shortcut to the goal. Just as no decision is frequently the worst decision, no action may be the worst action.

Mr. President, the Korean delegation would like to commend your able and active leadership in activating the Conference on Disarmament. We expect the same excellent leadership from the incoming president, Ambassador Oyarce, and confirm the Korean delegation's full support for him.

Mr. Suda (Japan): Mr. President, sorry for asking for the floor at almost the very end of today's meeting, but I would like to join the others in welcoming the Belgian ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament. And, as a co-host of the side event, I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all participants in that side event, including the experts from capitals. My special thanks go to the Australian delegation, led by Ambassador Woolcott, who chaired the side event. My delegation is very glad to learn from the discussions here that many delegations — indeed, most of them — are really enthusiastic about starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) in the Conference on Disarmament as soon as possible, and also all the delegations that are very much interested in continuing discussions at the plenary on a FMCT, together with other important issues. And I am also very glad to see that a correct understanding of the objective and nature of the side event is shared by all the members here. I was particularly glad to learn that so many delegations and participants in the side event found great merit in it. So, Japan, together with Australia, will continue this effort in the near future.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to you, Mr. President, for your excellent leadership in the past four weeks since the outset of this year's session.

Mr. Lusinski (Poland): Mr. President, on behalf of my country, I would like to express my gratitude to the Australian ambassador for providing us with an opportunity to exchange views with the experts who joined us for a couple of days from capitals. Although they were informal talks, they helped us to keep in touch with the scientific community and with technological updates that might be useful in our proceedings, and in this respect I would like to express my gratitude to you, Mr. President, for allowing this exercise.

Mr. Manfredi (Italy): Mr. President, first of all, echoing what my colleagues said earlier, I would like to express our great satisfaction and gratitude to you for the manner in which you have conducted your presidency of the Conference. Also, we would like to welcome the new Belgian Ambassador and hope to work productively with him.

My delegation sat through the three days of the side event on fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) definitions, and we were very impressed by how it was conducted and its outcome. When it was announced in the plenary a few days ago, we hoped that it would be a useful educational experience, and in fact it was. In our opinion, educational experiences should always be encouraged and not discouraged. So I think that it would be very good if

Australia and Japan could repeat this side event on other topics related to FMCT, which is one of the core issues that have the greatest interest for our Conference, for future negotiation. However, I think that other countries in the Conference with other priorities could also, if they wish, organize side events on other core issues, and they would also be useful educational experiences for all of us.

Mr. Somogyi (Hungary): Mr. President, first of all let me thank you for your excellent work in leading us to this last plenary of your term. Also, I would like to mention that I am speaking now in my national capacity, and would like to welcome the new Belgian ambassador.

Only a couple of minutes ago I heard the term “undermine”, and as a coordinator on the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, I feel obliged to react to this, using an analogy from architecture. In the Middle Ages, when the first cathedrals were built, sometimes strong winds blew and the walls were damaged; the master builders invented the idea of using supporting walls. These walls were not visible from inside the cathedral, but the walls provided extra support for the cathedral and the work in the cathedral. Our delegation sees the Australian and Japanese side event as a “supporting wall” to the Conference on Disarmament. We are among those countries that were able to bring experts from capitals. We provided our own paper with definitions, and dealing with production as well. The discussion was very educative for me as well, taking me back to secondary grammar school, knowing much more about isotopes and the technical aspects of our work here today. And the work is not done yet, I think. I would like to see more side events on aspects of a fissile material cut-off treaty, and we are ready to take part in those side events. So, thanks to Australia, Japan and Switzerland for organizing this event, and we hope that we can continue in this constructive spirit.

Thank you again, Mr. President, and I am looking forward to working with the next president of the Conference on Disarmament starting next week.

The President: Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I see none.

As I warned colleagues on Tuesday, I do have a few final remarks to make at this point. This marks the end of the Canadian presidency, and already I feel the power and the glory kind of slipping away and moving to our colleague from Chile.

I would like to thank all of those who thanked me, but perhaps you are anxious to see me moving out. I would like to thank all of you, all the members of the Conference on Disarmament, for your generosity in seeing me during all those bilateral consultations that we had and, for a number of delegations, several times over and also, of course, in the respective regional context. Similarly, I would like to thank the representatives of civil society and observer States for meeting with me. Kudos particularly to Reaching Critical Will – I would certainly read your “Notes from the Gallery” every time: honest assessments on what is going on in the Conference on Disarmament. Thank you to the regional coordinators and the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, who have worked so diligently, both with me and of course with our colleagues the other five presidents for 2011. I pledge constant and consistent engagement with them and give my full support to our next president, Ambassador Oyarce.

Finally, special thanks to the interpreters. I hope they made me sound reasonably coherent in all United Nations languages and perhaps even in English also.

Short of a programme of work, we have had, I think, some thoughtful and substantive exchanges on all the four core issues, and certainly I think the incoming president has noted that some members would like to explore other elements of the agenda outside the core issues. I do believe that we have had a very respectful tone, and I certainly

hope that the momentum and the spirit of our discussions will continue. I am sure of it. So, thank you again, and over to Ambassador Oyarce.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held under the presidency of Chile on Tuesday, 22 February 2011, at 10 a.m.

This meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.



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